

Why Planned Parenthood Needs to be Funded.

by Catherine Proppe

Imagine a world where every child is a wanted child, where every pregnancy is a cause for celebration. That's the vision of Planned Parenthood. But let's face it, for many women, the diagnosis of pregnancy is an unwanted catastrophe. And there are significant reasons for women to be terrified of pregnancy, aside from the prospect of a new 24 hour a day 7 day a week 365 day a year job that doesn't pay anything, costs significant sums of money, and offers no time off for sickness or vacation.

Pregnancy is not a benign condition. Pregnancy causes women to die. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Center for Disease Control, "over 600 women die each year in the United States as a result of pregnancy or delivery complications." In 2013, worldwide, 289,000 women died due to pregnancy and childbirth. (*Forbes Magazine*, December 14, 2015, p. 102)

But let's say a woman gets lucky and doesn't die of pregnancy. She is very likely to undergo major abdominal surgery as a result of her pregnancy. According to the CDC, "In 2007, nearly one-third (32%) of all births were cesarean deliveries." One-third.

"Cesarean delivery...is associated with higher rates of surgical complications and maternal rehospitalization...In addition to health and safety risks for mothers and newborns, hospital charges for a cesarean delivery are almost double those for a vaginal delivery, imposing significant costs."

Women who have so-called "normal" pregnancies are at risk of prolonged travail, serious hemorrhoids, episiotomy, urination problems, and fecal incontinence. In addition, women are subject to pregnancy illnesses such as gestational diabetes, high blood pressure, anemia, severe depression, and hyperemesis gravidarum, severe, persistent nausea and vomiting.

But besides putting a woman's life and health at significant risk, a woman must change her lifestyle to accommodate her pregnancy, including numerous visits to an obstetrician, new clothing, a new diet, travel restrictions, avoidance of x-rays and exposure to chemicals, sleep and eating difficulties, and, not least of all, informing her family, friends, and employer of her pregnancy.

A pregnant woman must adjust her employment situation to accommodate maternity leave and child care. Woe to the woman who finds herself unemployed and pregnant. There aren't many employers who are eager to hire a woman who is months away from giving birth.

So, why don't these women just use birth control if they don't want to get pregnant? Besides those women whose employers won't provide birth control coverage because birth control violates the employer's moral code, birth control is somewhat widely available, although the most reliable forms do require a prescription from a doctor.

Well, maybe birth control isn't all it's cracked up to be. In 2004, the CDC asked pregnant women if they were trying to become pregnant. Approximately half the women who became pregnant unintentionally were using birth control! Birth control fails.

According to the CDC, in 2008, an estimated 6,578,000 pregnancies resulted in 4.2 million live births, 1.2 million induced abortions, and 1.1 million fetal losses. "...an estimated 84% of women who had an abortion in 2008 were unmarried." That's over a million unmarried women who decided to terminate a pregnancy that they didn't want. Does this country really need a million more unwanted, fatherless children born to women against their will? Do we have a million families lined up waiting to adopt or foster children?

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Children's Bureau, in 2008 approximately 136,000 children were adopted in the United States, one-tenth of the number of abortions for that year. And there is no shortage of children available for adoption in this country. Look no farther than our foster care system.

According to the U.S. Administration for Children and Families, on September 30, 2014 there were 415,129 children in foster care in this country. Of these, 107,918 were waiting to be adopted. For 60,898 of these children waiting to be adopted, the parental rights of their parents had been terminated.

Meanwhile, closer to home, Michigan's child welfare system has been under court oversight since 2008. A July 2, 2015 article in the *Lansing State Journal* reports that:

"Michigan's 'failure to achieve the minimum safety standards for children in foster care is a persistent and dire problem'...Michigan has fallen short of federal standards by 1,240 children who suffered repeat maltreatment and 434 abused or neglected in foster care since a modified settlement was signed in 2011."

So, the answer is no, in this country and in this state we are not in a position to provide adequate care for a million more unwanted children a year.

Even if these unwanted children were to reside with the mothers who were forced to have them against their will, their plight is questionable. According to a 2002 report by *Michigan in Brief* children living only with their mother are seven times more likely to live in poverty than those in two-parent families.

If these unmarried mothers are expecting to collect child support in Michigan, they might not want to hold their breath. Quoting a 2013 report by Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette, "In Michigan, unpaid child support continues to be a major socio-economic problem with more than \$9.2 billion dollars in support owed."

Finally, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that 702,208 children were victims of abuse and neglect in 2014, up from 682,307 in 2013.

In summary, pregnancy is not a benign condition. Pregnancy kills women and causes them to suffer significant illness and harm. Even under the best conditions pregnancy and parturition are difficult and painful. Lifestyle changes to accommodate pregnancy and childcare are probably the most profound and enduring changes a woman will ever face. Women have a lot at stake when it comes to pregnancy. And we here today, sitting in this warm, comfortable room, have no business interfering with or restricting the crucial and private pregnancy decisions for people we do not know and will never meet.